

cuts \$270 billion from Medicare and billions of dollars more from student loans in order to pay for a tax break for the wealthiest people in this country. Say it again, the Gingrich plan cuts \$270 billion in Medicare and billions more in student loans aimed at middle-class families in order to give a tax break for the wealthiest people in this country.

Mr. Speaker, no Congress in our history, in the history of this country, has ever demanded an increase in Medicare premiums as a condition of keeping the Government open. What I do not understand is the feelings that some Members in this body have, notably the Speaker, toward Medicare.

Medicare, Mr. Speaker, has been in effect for 30 years and a few months. It was created in 1965 when Lyndon Johnson signed the Medicare Act in July of that year. At that time 50 percent of America's elderly had no health insurance. Today between 1 and 2 percent of America's elderly have no health insurance. This is a successful program. It is expensive, but it has helped people live better and helped people live longer. It is a Government program that works. It is probably, very possibly, probably the Government program that has done the best things for the people of this country, perhaps of any program in the history of this country.

Yet Speaker GINGRICH said, speaking to a bunch of insurance executives who will benefit monetarily in a big, big way from the Gingrich Medicare plan, he said, "Now, we don't want to get rid of Medicare in round one because we don't think that is politically smart. We don't think that is the right way to go through our revolutionary transition. But we believe that Medicare is going to wither on the vine."

This is a man that took the oath of office to the people of this country. Yet all of us, I think, have an obligation to the people of this country to make sure that we honor the trust, the agreement between the American people and this Government that Medicare be there and work for people.

Medicare works. It is a program that works. It has insured a huge number of elderly people in this country and made a difference in keeping their lives healthier and helping them live longer.

The other attack from this Government, from the Gingrich budget and the Gingrich plan, is an attack on student loans and middle-class families. How can we look to the future when we are cutting, taking away the ability, reducing the ability of middle-class families in this country to send their kids to college. Whether it is Ohio State, whether it is a private school, whether it is Lorain County Community College, students have needed those student loans, they have two parents working oftentimes. Often the student himself or herself is working but they need those student loans in order to go to college, in order to get the kind of degree to compete with people around the world.

Employers around Lorain County in my district, in and around Toledo and my friend from Lucas County's district and around Ohio and around this country, employers tell us over and over that they have got \$8- and \$12- and \$15-an-hour jobs out there and sometimes they cannot find people qualified to fill them. We have got to continue to put, to move forward in global competition. We have got to ensure that students get loans. This Gingrich budget goes right at the heart of middle-class America in cutting and reducing and eliminating student loan programs. It simply does not make sense, Mr. Speaker.

I ask again this House for a clean continuing resolution, a clean debt ceiling resolution. It is absolutely senseless to hold up the Government in order to cut Medicare and in order to cut student loans. Let us move forward on these clean resolutions. Let us debate Medicare. Let us debate student loans and see what the country thinks and make those decisions separately and move forward the way we were elected to do.

NAFTA ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman and wish to state that I think this is a sad night for America, for our country and this Congress, as we are held hostage by a few extremists who want to take actions like raising premiums on Medicare part B for our senior citizens and rolling back environmental standards across this country, under the guise of a bill that is supposed to be about running our country and conducting the people's business.

One of the reasons that the Government is short on funds and our families are working harder and showing less for it in their pocketbooks and their wallets is because of the dry rot inside the economy of the United States. It is that that I want to focus on, and it is that subject I wish that we as a Congress would be focusing on.

This week represents the second anniversary of NAFTA's passage on November 17, 1993. Each day this week, several of my colleagues and I will be here on this floor discussing various aspects of that agreement. We will be calling attention to its performance to date which can be properly characterized as truly dismal and devastating for thousands of Americans as well as Mexican workers and their families. But it has been truly rewarding for speculators on Wall Street and Mexico's Wall Street at the Bolsa in Mexico City.

Promises, promises, we were given lots of promises. During the NAFTA debate we were promised it would create 200,000 jobs just this year; good jobs, they told us, jobs that could help

people pay taxes, jobs that could help people increase their incomes. However, as the Wall Street Journal recently reported, the reality is, and I quote: "There has been no evidence of any overall gain in jobs as a result of this agreement with Mexico."

In fact, by the end of this year, 800,000 people in our country and several million in Mexico will have had their jobs put on the chopping block because of this agreement.

Think about the toll of human lives in our country just in the last 2 weeks. Fruit of the Loom announced 3,200 jobs being shut down in this country in Kentucky, Alabama, Mississippi, the Carolinas, moving to Mexico. And 479 workers out of work in St. Joseph, Missouri. They made Lee jeans. They earned \$8.35 an hour. And chocolate workers in Hershey, Pennsylvania who were told that they are going to be laid off, get their pink slips because Hershey has decided to move its production of Giant Kisses to Guadalajara, Mexico. So I guess we could say NAFTA has become a giant kiss of death for many workers in our country.

I want to pause here for a moment and say that NAFTA did not really grow out of a vacuum. It is merely one agreement within the larger context of our Nation's extremely flawed and ill-advised trade agreements which purposely ignore consequences on large segments of our people. These policies and trade agreements have spawned and destroyed both jobs and wealth in our country by providing incentives to export our jobs someplace else, exporting income from our people, increasing frustration in our electorate and causing a kind of doubt about the ability of this Government to deliver.

There is economic dry rot out there in our country. Think about the last 20 years. The average American family has not had an increase in their purchasing power. In fact, the high school graduate today makes 27 percent less in real wages on what they can actually buy with their check than their counterparts did 20 years ago, but the chief executive officers of our country are earning just in the last year 12 percent more real wages than they did in the prior year.

Now, what exactly are those CEO's being rewarded for? Fortune 500 companies have not created a single job in this country for a decade. Virtually all their investment in production has been abroad. American workers are being asked to compete against capital that can move anywhere in the world, foreign cartels that block our access into their markets and millions of low-wage workers in the world who live under undemocratic regimes.

The resultant pulldown in wages in our country has been verified by economists like the University of California's Professor George Borjas, who maintains at least 25 percent of the loss in wages in this country is due to the type of trade agreement that we

got ourselves locked into including the NAFTA agreement.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that this week we will be introducing the NAFTA Accountability Act. My colleagues and I will be on the floor talking about its various provisions. We are going to listen to what the public is telling us. Once we restore the economic health of the country it will be easier to restore the governance of the Nation.

NAFTA DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. ANDREWS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, it appears certain that tomorrow a substantial portion of the Federal Government will shut down. That is a very serious and very negative and very real thing for hundreds of thousands of people who work for the Federal Government in this country. I regret that.

I would urge my colleagues to work together tonight and for the rest of this week as long as it takes to prevent that. There is no good reason why these good people have to be put at risk tomorrow.

I want to come back to something that my friend from Ohio just talked about a few minutes ago. That is there have been lots of other shutdowns in America in the last few years as well that have nothing to do, directly at least, with the Federal payroll but have a lot to do with the shutdown of economic growth and opportunity. Yes; it is true and it is regrettable that hundreds of thousands of Federal employees will not go to work and will not get paid tomorrow and will not be able to pay their bills.

A lot of other Americans will not go to work tomorrow, too; the ones who worked in manufacturing jobs and made \$10 or \$12 or \$15 an hour and saw their job go to Mexico or Malaysia. A lot of other Americans will go to work tomorrow in jobs that pay them 40 or 50 percent of what they need to make to meet their family budget. The man or the woman who was working in mid-management at a bank and making \$40,000 or \$45,000 a year a few years ago who now is making \$20,000 or \$25,000 a year.

A lot of young Americans will go to work tomorrow at the shopping mall at their part-time job, even though they have a master's degree or a college degree in a field that ought to get them a job at a much higher rate of wages. A lot of senior citizens tomorrow are going to wake up and wonder if they are going to be able to turn their heater above 65 degrees because they are so worried they cannot pay their utility bill.

The rest of America, Mr. Speaker, sort of shut down a while ago. A lot of American families have seen their budgets shut down and be ratcheted down. So maybe it is time that we had

this confrontation here to talk about our Federal budget and its impact on the family budget.

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I agree, as a Democrat, with my friends, Mr. Speaker, across the aisle who say that we ought to balance the budget and do it in 7 years, and I agree with them that it ought to be done without increasing the tax burden on the American people. They are already overtaxed as far as I am concerned. I do not agree with the exact way that our Republican friends have chosen to do this.

I think that we should be getting rid of accounts that pay for overseas advertising by food companies, not getting rid of remedial reading teachers in the public schools. I think that we can go to some of our agribusinesses in this country that receive welfare checks not to grow food and cut them off instead of raising the cost of going to college for middle-class families. I think that a lot of the tax loopholes and giveaways in the Internal Revenue Code to insurance companies, and banks, and Fortune 500 companies could go by the wayside so we would not have to be raising Medicare premiums on the elderly in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I think we can do it differently, but I agree we have to do it. We have to balance the budget, and we ought to do it in 7 years, and we ought to get to work instead of standing around here tonight just talking to each other about it.

But we ought to do some other things as well. We ought to fix and change our educational system in this country so having a high school diploma means something again, so people are able to graduate from high school and get a job in a noncollege situation, so that people who choose to be a bricklayer, or computer technician, or a cosmetologist, or an electronics worker, can go to school, get a high quality education, get into the job market. We ought to fix our trade policy so that Americans can compete and sell our products in other countries as well as other countries can sell their products here. We should get rid of some of the foolish and pointless regulations that we have imposed on our businesses that do not clean the water, or protect our workplaces, or clean the air, but simply raise the cost of doing business.

Mr. Speaker, it is essential, but not sufficient, to balance the budget in 7 years, but by all means, Mr. Speaker, it is essential for us to get to work, and I hope that what we do in the next couple of days is put aside the posturing over the 1996 election and get to the serious business of worrying about the real problems of real Americans out there tonight, Mr. Speaker, who are afraid they cannot pay their bills, who are watching their incomes shrink, and their taxes rise, and their children's hopes evaporate.

America is in a real and deep economic crisis. For us to fiddle as family

finances burn, for us to talk about who is going to get elected in 1996 rather than who is going to be able to pay their bills in the next 6 days or 6 months is really a disservice to this country.

Let us get to work, Mr. Speaker, and do the job the people sent us here to do.

HOW TO BALANCE THE BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BARR of Georgia). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. ROEMER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROEMER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk just briefly about where we are tonight at 10 minutes of 8 o'clock to my constituents back in Indiana, roughly 4 hours and 10 minutes before the Government might shut down, which is a very, very serious consideration and a serious subject for people throughout this country.

I think, Mr. Speaker, quite frankly that it should not have come to this. It should not come to a situation where we are messing around with the credit rating and the ability of the Secretary of the Treasury, and the U.S. Government, and the President, and Members of the Republican Party and the Democratic Party, to negatively affect our ability to pay on our debt. I think the American people at this time, 4 hours from now, talking about the Government shutting down, are saying to one another they do not want us to act like Republicans and Democrats, and pointing our fingers, talking about gridlock, and partisan games, and even deadlock as we reach this midnight bewitching hour, but what are we doing for the best interests of America? What kinds of considerations are we making for the hard-working people of this country that want to balance the budget, that do not want to see their taxes go up, but want a fair outcome when we balance the budget, that want to make sure that the budget is not balanced on the backs of senior citizens that barely make it month to month on their Medicare or their Social Security, senior citizens that I listen to and work with in my district all the time who tell me, not only do they barely make it by the dime or the quarter, but these senior citizens are the people that, when they get a gift, somebody gives them a present, a birthday present, an anniversary present, they usually keep that wrapping paper and reuse it, or, if they are going to buy something from the supermarket, oftentimes the seniors in northern Indiana will go to three and four different places to find the best bargain, sometimes eating up, maybe, in gas money what they may have saved looking for the best bargain because they know month to month they are barely going to make it.

Mr. Speaker, we should not be cutting Medicare by \$270 billion. We should also not be cutting student loans by \$10 billion. One of the most